

## Appropriations Committee Testimony 2/17/2022

Elaine Balsley  
Executive Director, Reachout, Inc.  
Birth to Three agency

Thank you for allowing me to testify today.

I am the Executive Director of a Birth to Three agency, one of 19 in the state. We are a not for profit organization that has provided Birth to Three services for 27 years.

We provide in-home services to children ages 0-3 with developmental disabilities.

Birth to Three agencies are reimbursed on a fee for service basis.

So, if there is no visit because the parent canceled at the last minute, the child or family member is ill, the therapist got stuck in traffic, etc., there is no reimbursement. Even if you drove all the way to the appointment and confirmed with the parent, but it's a no-show. Paid time off or continuing education for staff is necessary, but during that time, there is substantially less revenue.

We cannot bill for time in the car, which is substantial.

We cannot bill for orientation and ongoing required training, which is also substantial.

We did not bill for services that were not provided due to a pandemic but I still paid my staff.

Agencies are completely dependent on visits and an administrative fee and we have been flat funded for 5, going on 6 years in terms of visit rate and administrative fee.

Costs have gone up- for everything. Reachout had a 17% health insurance increase in the last year alone.

I have experienced staff. Our annual health insurance premiums are between \$17,000 and \$24,000 per staff/family, and that's a Silver plan with a \$5,000/10,000 deductible.

The state personnel requirements for B23 requires we employ highly educated, certified and or licensed professionals. OT/PT/Speech/Special Educators.

Because costs are up and we have had no change in revenue, I have been unable to give a COLA for 3 years. I have stopped paying for mileage reimbursement. I can no longer offer a competitive wage in order to hire new staff.

How am I to retain staff or hire new staff? These professionals are not easy to find and we need to be competitive. We need both short and long term changes to ensure that programs are able to continue to do their very important work. **Early intervention works and it saves significant money when children no longer need or need less Special Education services.**

I'm happy to answer any questions you may have. [ebalsley@reachoutinc.org](mailto:ebalsley@reachoutinc.org) 203-464-2414